

Eyewitnesses to the American Revolution

The War at Sea

A classroom play by Team HOPE

Cast List

John Paul Jones..... Captain in the United States Navy
Chief Student Correspondent in charge of facilitating the discussion
Student Correspondent 2 co-host and moderator
Student Correspondent 3 co-host and moderator
Student Correspondent 4 co-host and moderator

NOTE: All responses by historical figures are based on actual eyewitness sources and reflect actual events as closely as possible.

TEACHER NOTES

SETTING: A contemporary classroom. It is advised to set up the anchor in the front of the room facing the class, in front of some sort of background with “The History New Report.” Other correspondents and the historical figure can be placed in a semi-circle to the left or right of the anchor facing the rest of the class. A name plate in front of each cast member is highly recommended. A 5x8 index card folded in half works great for this purpose.

COSTUMES: Although not necessary, any period costumes for the historical figures are a great addition. Even a simple hat or wig is excellent.

MASKS: Masks are an easy addition that will add to the drama and make the entire event more fun for the students. First, go to www.google.com and click on “image search.” Type in the historical figure’s name and find an image of the person. Copy and paste the picture in a Word document. You may need to crop and then enlarge the photo so you get a picture large enough to be used as a mask. Portraits obviously work best for this use. Print out the picture and paste it onto a cardboard backing. You can tape a plastic spoon or popsicle stick to be used as a handle. You may decide to make masks for the student correspondents as well, using pictures of television news personalities for the masks.

Note: If there is a historical person you cannot find a picture for, don’t despair! Almost any random “period” person’s picture (as long as it not someone easily recognizable) would work as a mask.

ROLES: Encourage students to act out the roles with as much energy as possible. Do not be too terribly concerned that the sex of the historical figure matching with the sex of the student.

The teacher may decide to take a part in the play, role-modeling one of the historical figures. It is recommended that five copies of the scripts are specifically set aside for each character in the play. For each character, *highlight all their lines* in order to facilitate a faster pace of dialogue. All other students should receive an unmarked copy of the play to read as the play is performed.

DISCUSSION: Use the accompanying worksheet to facilitate discussion before and after the play. Students who are not directly involved in the play can attempt to write preliminary answers as the play is performed. The audience should be told that they will be the primarily responsible for the discussion questions at the end of the lesson.

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CAST ABBREVIATIONS

John Paul Jones.....**JONES**
Chief Student Correspondent**CHIEF**
Student Correspondent 2**ST1**
Student Correspondent 3**ST2**
Student Correspondent 4**ST3**

CHIEF Captain John Paul Jones joins us today. Welcome, Captain!

JONES It is a pleasure to be here.

ST1 Captain, can you give us a little of your background?

JONES I was born in Scotland and served on ships since boyhood. I loved the sea from a young age and wanted nothing more than to serve on a fast ship.

ST2 Why a fast ship?

JONES I didn't want any connection with any ship that did not sail fast, because I intended to go in harm's way!

ST3 What was your role in the American Revolution?

JONES I was head of the infant American navy, which at the time didn't consist of much. After the war broke out, I went to France to ask Franklin to help me get ships and supplies. Eventually, I was able to put together a small, but fast navy.

ST1 What was your plan?

JONES To attack the British in their home waters! I wanted to take the war to them. I knew the coast of Britain quite well because of my history serving on British ships as a boy, so I had an advantage there.

CHIEF Were you able to do this?

JONES Oh yes! In 1778, I spread panic all along the coast of England and Scotland. I seized British merchant ships and raided seaports. My favorite moment was when we attacked the town of Whitehaven, less than a hundred miles from London. I actually left England from that very port. Ha, a little welcome home gift! London went crazy from fear and panic, exactly what I hoped to accomplish.

ST2 But what purpose did this serve?

JONES By spreading fear and making the British vulnerable at home, I hoped to make the war unpopular in Britain, enough that they would eventually just quit.

ST3 Tell us about your famous sea battle with His Majesty's Ship (HMS) *Serapis*.

JONES It was September 23, 1779 and we were just off the coast of Britain. There we met *Serapis*, commanded by an excellent British Captain named Richard Pearson. I knew we were in for a fight. The first cannon volley was devastating. A gun exploded on our ship and many of my men were killed right there. I knew if we had a chance against *Serapis*, which had more powerful guns, we had to get as close as possible.

ST1 Closer? Wouldn't that be suicide?

JONES Oh, it was dangerous, but it would give us a distinct advantage. I had a unit of American and French Marine marksmen and the closer I got, the more accurate their musket fire. We pulled alongside *Serapis* and both ships just pounded each other.

ST2 This was the moment that Captain Pearson called out to you from *Serapis*?

JONES Exactly. We were getting hammered. Parts of the ship was on fire, we were taking on water, and frankly we were likely to sink. Then Pearson yelled out to me, "Are you going to strike?" Which means to pull down your flag and surrender. I was outraged! (*getting angry thinking about it*). I couldn't believe that Pearson thought I'd quit! I was offended! Those British lobsters always thought Americans were cowards. I yelled back at him (*fist in the air*), "**I have not yet begun to fight!**"

CHIEF To fight at that point seemed like suicide.

JONES Perhaps, but fight on we did. I order Master Stacey to use heavy ropes to tie us as close to *Serapis* as possible and for hours we just pounded each other snug as two logs in a woodpile, guns muzzle to muzzle.

ST3 How did the battle turn out?

JONES My marksmen high up in the masts won the day. They eventually completely cleared *Serapis*' decks. At that point I led a boarding party and captured the ship. Both ships lost almost 50 percent of their men and my ship could not be saved because it had taken such terrible damage. However, we showed the British that they had their hands full!

CHIEF Thank you for your time Captain Jones!